

volume 53: number 2

2021 spring

**IN SEARCH OF
SUSTAINABLE FASHION**
THE STORY OF INDIAN CHINTZ

p. 26

THE RIGHT KIND OF WHALE
HOW RIGHT WHALES BECAME A
TRAGIC TARGET OF HUNTING

p. 12

MAGAZINE of the ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

SPRING 2021

ELIAS SIME

An interview with the artist p. 18



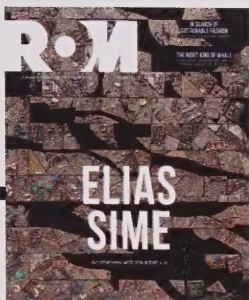
The Cloth that changed the World

India's Painted and Printed Cottons

Explore the cloth that revolutionized fashion,
art and science around the globe.

Woman's jacket. Made in coastal southeast India for the Dutch market; used in Hindeloopen, Friesland.
Mordant-dyed and resist-dyed cotton, 18th century, 57.8 cm. The ROM is an agency of the government of Ontario.

ON NOW



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Elias Sime, *Tightrope 3*.
Photo credit: Private collection,
New York. © Elias Sime.

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SARAH FEE

SENIOR CURATOR, GLOBAL FASHION & TEXTILES

Fee stewards the ROM's renowned collection of around 15,000 textiles and fashions that come from greater Asia and Africa, as well as eastern Europe. She is lead curator of the current exhibition *The Cloth That Changed the World*.



SILVIA FORNI

SENIOR CURATOR, ART & CULTURE: GLOBAL AFRICA

Forni has been working with African art and artists for more than 20 years. She is interested in the tensions, dynamics, and feedbacks that inspire contemporary creators in Africa and the way art challenges how Africa has been constructed in the Western imagination.



JACQUELINE MILLER

MAMMALOGY TECHNICIAN

Miller prepares specimens and manages the mammalogy collection at the ROM. She is currently completing her PhD on the evolution of communication systems in wild mice. Previously, she was an emergency room nurse for 28 years.



OLIVER HADDRATH

MOLECULAR TECHNICIAN

Haddrath is responsible for one of the ROM's two DNA labs and the new ancient genomics lab, where the genomes of modern and historical blue whales have recently been sequenced to learn about the impacts of whaling.

CONTACT US

Questions? Comments? Email us at magazine@rom.on.ca.

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A RESPONSIVE AND OUTWARD-FACING MUSEUM



One year ago, the world came to a sudden standstill due to the pervasive spread of COVID-19. Today, as we work to reach the other side of the pandemic, it has become clear that museums are poised to play a crucial role in the rebuilding process, not only in addressing the ongoing impact of the health crisis, but also in engaging with the issues of race, equity, and the climate crisis that have come to the fore throughout this time. As a leading civic institution, the ROM is committed to meet the moment and help restore the cultural, social, and economic life of our community.

This work is already well underway. Established in our broader strategic plan is a clear mandate to create an ever more engaged, responsive, diverse, and outward-facing institution. Following such guiding principles ensures a stronger and better Museum for all and allows us to play our part in a robust and sustained recovery.

This mandate is also evident throughout our landmark 2021 special exhibition schedule, which includes the historic opening of our brand new, first-of-its-kind, 10,000-square-foot permanent gallery, the Willner Madge

Gallery, Dawn of Life, and the highly anticipated summer debut of *Great Whales: Up Close and Personal*, the next chapter in the incredible journey that began with 2017's *Out of the Depths: The Blue Whale Story*.

This year's new exhibitions kick off in April with the timely Canadian premiere of *Elias Sime: Tighrope*, the first major touring survey of the influential and critically acclaimed contemporary, Ethiopian artist Elias Sime. Featuring 24 intricately woven large-scale tableaux, *Tighrope* challenges our ideas of what it means to be human in a digital age and raises important questions about the tensions and balances that connect people, technology, and nature.

Concurrently, we have been making important strides in our mission-based work to better reflect the multiplicity of voices and perspectives that define our country and world. As part of these efforts, in January, we installed a new ROM-commissioned portrait of Austin Clarke in our Sigmund Samuel Gallery of Canada. One of the country's pre-eminent writers and civil rights activists, Austin Clarke reflected the unvarnished truths of the Black experience in Canada. Moreover, his work speaks to

who we are as a nation of diverse voices. Our commission and display of Clarke's portrait in *Austin Clarke: Recognizing a Literary Great* not only marks a purposeful step toward enhancing the ROM's permanent collection, but also plays an important part in our commitment to more accurately depict the lived experience of Black Canadians and their enduring presence throughout this country's history. Like Sime's sublime works, the portrait of Austin Clarke is nothing short of inspirational. I encourage you to make visiting both a part of your 2021 calendar.

In the critical days and months ahead, as we endeavour to move beyond the global pandemic, the ROM is ready to help our communities recover and rebuild by offering a place of inspiration and discovery. I look forward to seeing you here.

JOSH BASSECHES
ROM DIRECTOR & CEO

ROM Field Trips Go Virtual

New Virtual Field Trip programs amplify Indigenous knowledges and perspectives



The ROM School Programs team was already hard at work reinventing our programming when the pervasive spread of COVID-19 shut down institutions throughout the province and created an increased urgency for a different kind of learning.

To address this necessity, in the fall of 2020, we launched the ROM Virtual Field Trip program with the aim of connecting students in their classrooms and homes with cultural objects and natural specimens in the ROM's collections.

This new learning model signals an important shift in our curriculum-connected programming. Led by a team of high-calibre museum educators, including four Indigenous Museum Educators, our virtual field trips are interactive, object- and inquiry-based learning experiences for students from kindergarten to Grade 12.

Framed to amplify Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, these virtual experiences challenge students to apply their learning from multiple sources, encouraging them to become more deeply involved in creating meaningful connections with the world around them.

The response to our virtual programs from Ontario educators has been extraordinary, enabling us to reach close to 36,000 students across the province since December. The ROM deeply appreciates the generous support of our donors, which has enabled us to offer our virtual field trips free to publicly funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario for the remainder of the 2020–21 school year. For more information on virtual field trips or to learn how you can help support learning across Ontario, please visit rom.on.ca/learn.

“

Can I say how amazing our session was today? My Grade 8s were extremely engaged. After the session, we talked about what resonated with them. They were inspired. They enjoyed learning about the Indigenous culture, but they also felt moved by the issues that the Indigenous people are facing today. Thank you for this experience.

—Lucy Chang from Regent Heights P.S.

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ELIAS SIME: TIGHTROPE

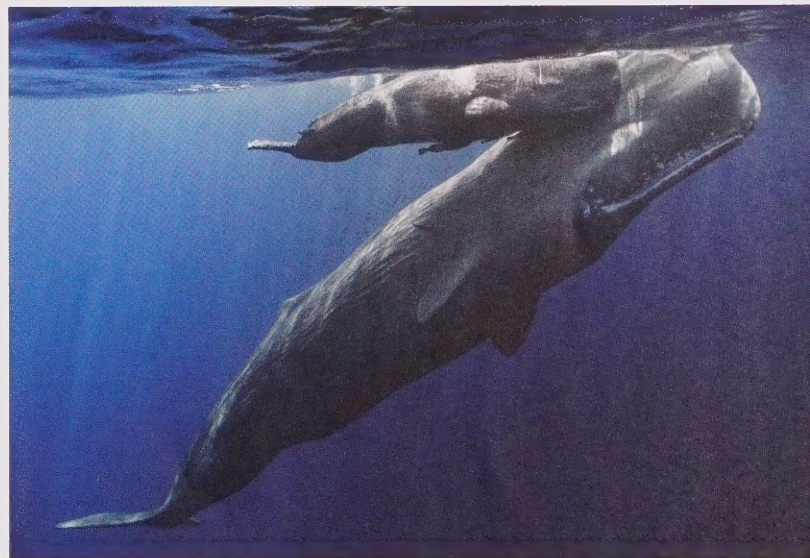
Thursday, April 1, 2021 | 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Representing a survey of award-winning Ethiopian contemporary artist Elias Sime, *Tightrope* features 24 intricately woven and densely layered artworks (including one from the ROM's permanent collection) that use found materials—such as thread, buttons, or electrical parts—to illuminate the uneasy balance between technological innovation and environmental destruction. This exhibition marks the Canadian debut of this critically acclaimed presentation.



We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Elias Sime: Tightrope is organized by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.



GREAT WHALES: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

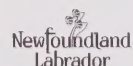
Friday, June 25, 2021 | 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 26, 2021 | 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Great whales are evolutionary marvels, cultural icons, and the largest animals on Earth. They are also critically endangered and need our help. This ROM-original exhibition takes visitors on a deep dive into the unique biology, ecological importance, and mysterious lives of three majestic species in the Canadian Atlantic—the North Atlantic right whale, the blue whale, and the sperm whale.

Great Whales: Up Close and Personal shines a light on the plight of these social and emotional creatures, helping visitors forge a genuine connection to, and empathy for, these underwater giants.

Please visit rom.on.ca/members/events for a list of all Member-related events and programs.



Supporting Sponsor: Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism
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Our priority is to ensure Members enjoy the full benefit of ROM membership. We are continuing to plan Member previews, exchange weekends, special offers and more. Please watch your Member emails for the most updated information or visit rom.on.ca/members/events.



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Gardiner Museum

ROM Members enjoy 20% off admission to the Gardiner Museum and 10% off their meal (alcohol not included) at Clay Restaurant in the beautiful third-floor Terrace Room. Present your ROM membership card and photo ID at the front desk to take advantage of this special offer. This offer cannot be combined with any other offers or special discounts. Blackout dates may apply. Call the Gardiner Museum for more details at 416.586.8080.

Royal BC Museum

ROM Members receive 20% off daily admission rates to the Royal BC Museum. ROM Members must present valid ROM membership cards and photo ID at the box office to receive their discount. Excludes Family admission rate. One discount per membership card. Not valid for online purchases or any other offer.

Please visit rom.on.ca/reciprocal for details.



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The ROM plays an important role as a place of discovery, learning, and escape. The gift of a ROM membership will help ensure that our ongoing research, preservation, and curatorial work continues.

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Thank you for your continued support.

As a ROM Member, you are an integral part of the social fabric that makes the ROM one of the world's leading museums of art, culture, and nature. Your support provides essential funding for educational programs, research, collections, community outreach, and operations.

Your membership helps support our access programs and open the doors of the Museum to underserved communities, as well as helps fund our growing slate of original programs and exhibitions, which provide inspiring learning opportunities, diverse perspectives, and a home for lifelong learners.

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dispatches

research and discoveries

DISCOVERY

NEW DISCOVERY SHEDS LIGHT ON THE MYSTERIOUS FAMILY LIFE OF THE NOTORIOUS SABRE-TOOTHED CAT

Like many of today's millennials, adolescent sabre-toothed cats stayed with family longer than expected

Since the animal's extinction some 11,000 years ago, the social life of the menacing sabre-toothed cat has remained a mystery to scientists and enthusiasts alike. But a new study of fossils at the ROM has uncovered the surprisingly intimate relationships between these pop-culturally-beloved ice age predators and their adolescent offspring.

By studying a large tar deposit formed on an ancient coastal plain in present-day Ecuador, scientists at the ROM and the University of Toronto were able to document a family grouping of *Smilodon fatalis*. What they discovered was that while the supersized felines grew quite quickly, they also appeared to stay with their mother for longer than some other large cats did before forging their own path.

The results, published in the journal *iScience*, provide a fascinating window into the family lives of these notorious mammals. Life, it turns out, was not too dissimilar from that of modern-day humans.

"I stopped growing taller when I was twelve, but I didn't move away from home until many years later," explains Ashley Reynolds, a graduate student based at the ROM who led the study while completing her PhD research in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology at the University of Toronto. "These cats seem to have been doing something similar."

The ROM team, which included Reynolds, her thesis advisor and James and Louise Temerty Chair of Vertebrate Palaeontology David Evans, and ROM sabre-cat expert Kevin Seymour, were able to arrive at this conclusion thanks to a rare tooth condition



Smilodon fatalis cubs playing together.

found only in about five percent of the *Smilodon fatalis* population. By studying both the fossils and unique formation of the Ecuadorian deposit (obtained in the early 1960s by curators A. Gordon Edmund and Roy R. Lemon), the team discovered that three of the fossils were likely related: one adult and two "teenaged" cats. What's more, they were able to determine that the younger predators were at least two years old at the time of their death, an age at which some living big cats, such as tigers, are already independent.

"This work is not only an important discovery in the study of these famous sabre-toothed predators, but a testament to the importance of museum collections," says Evans. "These world-renowned collections were made by the ROM 60 years ago and have been studied for decades. But a measure of their significance is that they continue to produce new insights into the lives of these remarkable extinct animals."



A comparison of the lower left jaw bones from the two young sabre-toothed cats, *S. fatalis*, that were buried together. They show similar tooth formation, suggesting that the two were related.

MISSION TO MARS



An illustration of NASA's Perseverance rover landing safely on Mars.

PERSEVERANCE ROVER GIVES US THE MOST COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE PLANET TO DATE

On February 18, 2021, at 3:55 p.m. EST, the Mars Perseverance Rover touched down on the surface of the red planet. When it reached Mars, Perseverance had travelled 470.8 million kilometres on its journey from Earth.

The SUV-sized Rover, which weighs more than a metric ton, plunged through the thin Martian atmosphere at a speed over 20,000 km/h, deploying a parachute to slow down its descent to safely land on the surface.

The one-way time it takes for radio signals to travel from Earth to Mars is about 10.5 minutes, so Perseverance was designed to complete the hundreds of steps of entry, descent and landing (EDL) all autonomously. This part of the final phase can be so harrowing that the time period is referred to as the "seven minutes of terror," where a number of complications can arise.

After a nail-biting international broadcast, the Rover successfully landed at Jezero Crater, a large impact crater about 45 kilometres wide, just north of the Martian equator. This crater once contained a lake, which could be a good place to find evidence of ancient microbial life. On the Rover, there is a series of

instruments that can look for clues to answer the main question: Was there ever ancient life on Mars?

What is unique about this mission is the ability of the Rover to collect and store the most compelling rock and soil samples in tubes that will be cached on the surface. These sample tubes will be returned to Earth by a future mission in the 2030s.

Kim Tait, Teck Endowed Chair of Mineralogy at the ROM, has been part of the Mars Sample Return Science Program Group (MSPG) and is co-lead of the MSPG-2 Curation Focus Group. Her role is to prepare for these Martian samples to return to Earth and come up with the storage requirements and sample handling methods that will be required for some of the most precious materials ever brought to Earth.

As samples from Mars will be stored at Biosafety Level-4, or under the strictest of biohazard requirements known, until deemed safe for release, ample planning for their return needs to happen years in advance. One of the focus areas of the ROM's Earth and Space department is Martian meteorites and research goals of the MSPG-2 Curation Focus Group.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

MEMBERSHIP-ELECTED TRUSTEE POSITION ON THE ROM BOARD

The Royal Ontario Museum is governed by the *Royal Ontario Museum Act*, which established a Board of 21 Trustees. The Act mandates that three of the 21 Trustees are to be elected by the general membership of the ROM. One of the membership-elected trustee positions becomes vacant June 30, 2021.

Nominations for the membership-elected trustee position will be accepted by the ROM Board Office from Friday, March 19 until noon on Friday, April 23, 2021. The vacant term of office is July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024. Should more than one candidate be eligible, an election will be held from Monday, May 17 to Monday, May 31, 2021. To vote, a member must be in good standing for no less than 30 days prior to, and on the date of, the election (i.e. beginning on April 18, 2021).



Note: Due to COVID-19, the election will be held electronically. Members

are strongly encouraged to update their contact information by providing ROM membership with an email address. To update your contact information or ask a question about the process, please leave a message with the membership-elected trustee phone line at **416.586.5700**.

LEARN MORE

For more information on the nomination and election rules, please see the ROM's website: rom.on.ca/election.

TEACHER PROFILE

TEACHING NEW PERSPECTIVES

Leslie Kachena McCue is a proud member of the Mississaugas of Curve Lake First Nation and is an Indigenous Museum Educator and coordinator of the Youth Cabinet at the ROM. Leslie is an artist who also freelances in arts administration, facilitation, and project coordination for various organizations. Her work is driven by her past, her passion to educate, and the motivation to empower others.



What excites you about teaching at the ROM? I am truly enthusiastic about teaching new perspectives and sharing Indigenous ways of doing, knowing, and being at the ROM. Having permanent Indigenous Museum Educators is key to building Indigenous relations as we are able to share stories, lived experiences, and knowledges about ancestral objects like never before. Inspiring the next generation to become more informed learners of the past helps them be mindful, respectful, and courteous to each other in the present and protect the land, waters, and everything in creation that supports us in the future.

I also love my work with the ROM Youth Cabinet (YC). The group is a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth who work together over the year on a culminating project. In 2019, the YC completed and installed a permanent four-panel mural on Indigenous knowledges at the ROM. It brings me great joy to connect Indigenous youth with Elders, knowledge keepers, and artists, and find avenues for them to be involved in the community.

How has your approach to teaching changed as you've shifted to a virtual classroom? Teaching online has definitely presented new challenges, but also new opportunities to engage

students. I can still share ancestral objects, as well as give virtual tours of the Daphne Cockwell Gallery dedicated to First Peoples art & culture through Google Arts & Culture, but now, I can also share personal items that are often more contemporary and have a greater personal connection to me, deepening students' learning and understanding. Online learning has provided opportunities for students who may have been shy in person to express themselves and ask questions more freely.



Cradleboard, Northern Ojibwa, black spruce and white birch wood, tartan cloth, moose hide, c. 1954.

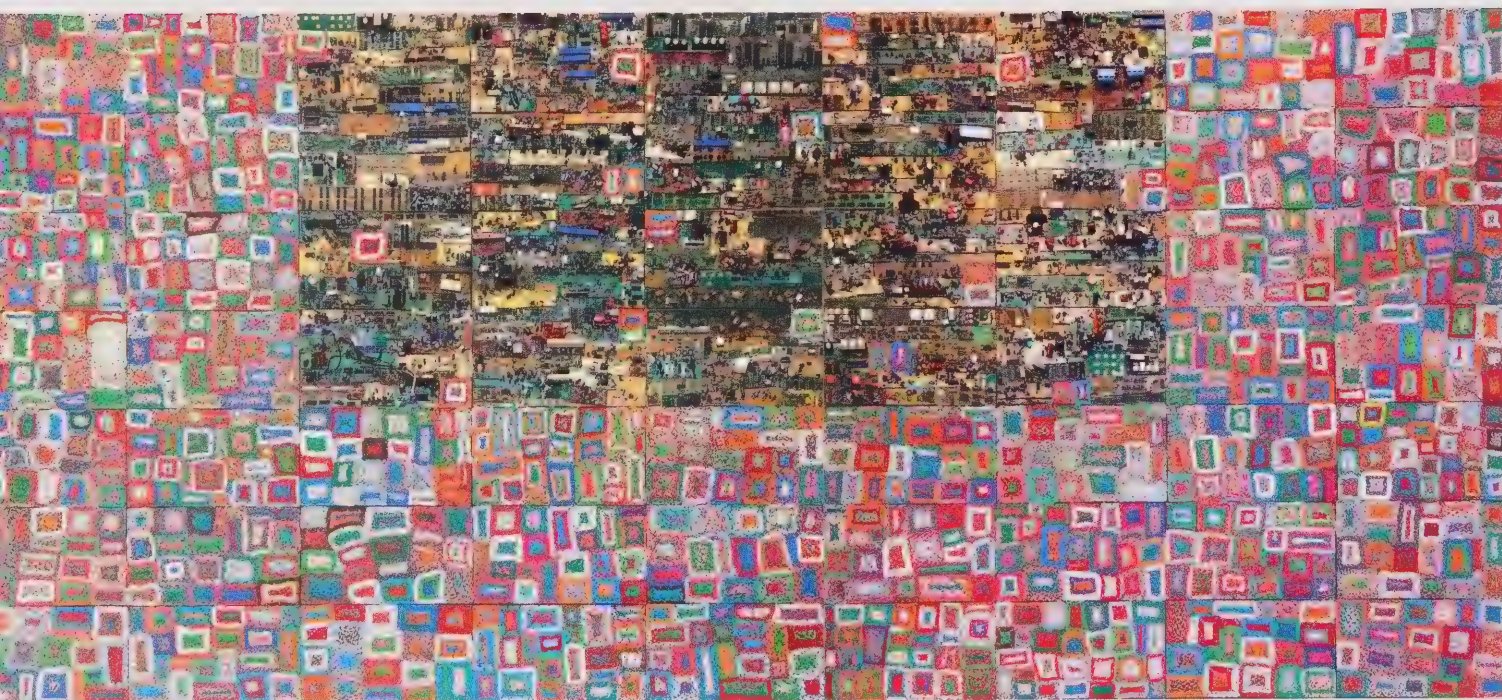
Can you share a memorable teaching moment at the ROM? I was in the gallery one day talking about Tikinaagans ("cradleboard" in English) and demonstrating how to wrap a baby in a Moss Bag to a group of students when a young couple came up with their newborn baby. Their baby began to cry, and they were about to leave the gallery to not disrupt our class, when I asked if I could try wrapping the baby in the Moss Bag. The Moss Bag creates a warm, womb-like comfort that makes babies feel safe and secure. They happily agreed, and as I got to the last two loops, the baby stopped crying. We walked around the gallery sharing stories, and when they were ready to leave, I slowly untied the Moss Bag and handed back their calm and sleepy baby. It is still one of my favourite teaching moments.

Is there an object that resonates most with you? The three cradleboards in the First Peoples gallery remind me of my responsibility as an Educator to young people and as coordinator of the YC. I think of who might have been cared for and wrapped in those particular cradleboards. It makes me cherish the times I have wrapped my younger family members in their cradleboards, and how we continue to wrap them with love and support as they grow.

Balancing Humanity and the Environment Through Art

A closer look at Elias Sime's *Tightrope*

BY SILVIA FORNI



Contemporary art presents a window into the world in which we live. Artists such as Elias Sime are often careful observers and critics of the society of their time. Sime's work is the oeuvre of a master that engages playfully with different art historical registers, from figuration to abstraction. *Tightrope* is an ongoing series that Sime has been producing over the last decade. Through his art, Sime invites us to reflect on the delicate balance between humanity and the environment in our contemporary world.

By choosing not to work with paint but to source his materials amongst the heaps of electronic waste of the Addis Ababa market (Mercato), Sime draws our attention to the complexity of the contemporary experience and the inescapable tensions between nature and human constructions that characterize our lives, no matter where we live.

Trained as a painter, Sime has experimented with a variety of materials that he uses as a palette for his complex compositions. While he masterfully

Tightrope: In Boxes
(2017) by Elias Sime.
Reclaimed electronic
components and
insulated wire on panel,
162.6 x 362.3 cm

“

By choosing not to work with paint but to source his materials amongst the heaps of electronic waste ... Sime draws our attention to the complexity of the contemporary experience and the inescapable tensions between nature and human constructions that characterize our lives, no matter where we live.



Electronic waste materials such as motherboards and telephone wires sourced from the Mercato market in Addis Ababa.

plays with the brilliant greens of the motherboards and the hues of telephone wires, he is also quite consciously engaging with the materiality of the electronic components he selects for his compositions. His material choices also point to the complex trajectories that have brought the electronic components to the Mercato of Addis Ababa, where he has acquired them. Cellular phones and computers have become indispensable tools for communication. We rely on them to work and keep in touch with our loved ones. They are also quintessential global commodities. They are made of parts invented or made in different countries, combined, manufactured, and sold across the globe, sometimes repurposed, and finally discarded, often quite far from where they were produced and used.

With his choice of materials, Sime is referencing not just the global flow of commodities, but also the structural imbalances that result in large amounts of electronic waste accumulating in Addis Ababa and other African cities. African markets are flooded with

cheap technology and second-hand computers, cell phones, and appliances often shipped to Africa to end their functioning lives. The tightrope that these materials evoke is thus also one of global ecological sustainability.

For Sime, humans are “the bridge between the natural and built environment.” What we build and the environment we live in are connected in profound and inescapable ways. Our progress and technological advancements transform not only the way we live and interact with one another, but also the environment on a local and global level.

Sime’s art invites a critical reflection on the Anthropocene but balances it with the human desire for beauty, poetry, and connectedness. He positions the viewer at the intersection of art, culture, and nature, forcing us to think about our contemporary humanity and our shared responsibility toward the environment. ▣

SILVIA FORNI is Senior Curator of Global Africa at the ROM.

THE
EXCLUSIVE
CANADIAN DEBUT OF
ELIAS SIME: TIGHTROPE
OPENS AT THE ROM
APRIL 3, 2021.
FEATURING 24
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Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at
Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.

The Right Kind of Whale

Named literally as the “right” type of whale to hunt, the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale is at risk of extinction

BY JACQUELINE MILLER AND OLIVER HADDRATH

HOW TO SEE IT

GREAT WHALES:

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

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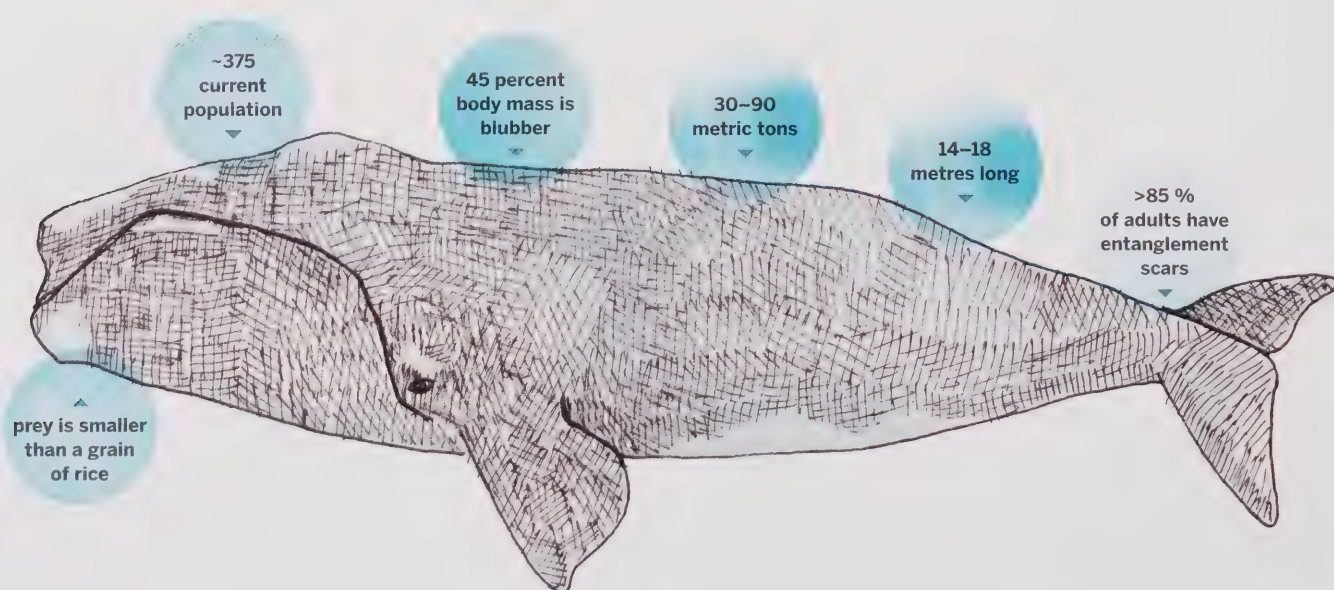
North Atlantic right whales are large baleen whales, measuring 14 to 18 metres in length and weighing 30 to 90 metric tons or more. Being large, slow swimmers who could be pursued by small boats, these animals were identified as the “right” kind for hunting by early Western whalers who found them to be the most profitable whales for commercial whaling. North Atlantic right whales are robust and have large fat reserves, with blubber composing up to 45 percent of their body mass, which meant they would float when killed, making it easier for hunters to haul them back to shore.

Despite the large size of right whales, most of their prey is smaller than a grain of rice. They feed mainly on copepods but also krill larvae. The miniscule copepods eaten are almost entirely

one species, *Calanus finmarchicus*. As you can imagine, the amount and concentration of tiny prey required to sustain such massive bodies is immense. When optimally nourished, females can give birth once every three years after reaching sexual maturity, but when females are in poorer condition, the number of births and overall reproductive success decline.

The challenges right whales face today began with their exploitation around 900 CE by Basque whalers. Several centuries of over-hunting resulted in the collapse of North Atlantic right whale populations in the eastern Atlantic. The hunt then shifted to the western side of the Atlantic, where so many whales were taken during the course of a few decades that the population there was hugely reduced by the middle of the 18th century.

Nearly 100,000 right whales of the species are estimated to have been caught worldwide before a moratorium on hunting them was declared in the 1930s by the first International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (a precursor to the International Whaling Commission) to prevent their extinction. Prior to whaling, estimates suggest that North Atlantic right whales numbered between 9,000 and 21,000. Today, there are less than 375, and fewer than 100 are breeding females (estimates now may be as low as 75). The moratorium allowed all populations to recover. The North Pacific and southern right whale populations have been increasing by as much as five to seven percent annually. The North Atlantic population’s recovery has been slower and currently is decreasing.





Three healthy southern right whales (from left) next to a North Atlantic right whale in visibly poorer body condition. Left to right: Southern right whales found near Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand compared with the North Atlantic right whale, which has less body mass than its sister species. Footage taken under research permit.

Even though hunting North Atlantic right whales is illegal, human activities still present the greatest threat to this species. Dangers include being struck by ships and getting entangled in fishing gear. This situation is made worse by the fact that the whales' habitat and migration routes cross major shipping lanes and are close to major ports along the Atlantic seaboard.

In spite of these threats, the population of North Atlantic right whales had increased during the latter half of the 20th century. However, between 2010 and 2015, the population began to decline at a rate of one percent per year. The decline was even more dramatic for females, whose numbers dropped by seven percent during that time. The plight of the North Atlantic right whale attracted national attention

in 2017 when 17 whales died in a single season due to human interaction: vessel strikes and entanglement.

A significant problem compounding decline is that the whales are getting thin. Researchers recently compared body conditions among the world's three right whale species, showing that the North Atlantic species had evidence of less body fat and poorer body condition.

This is likely linked to the chronic effects of entanglements, which can cause injury (85 percent of adults manifest entanglement scars) and increase the metabolic cost of swimming and feeding by weighing whales down. These additional challenges can lead to lower rates of calf survival and reduced overall reproductive success.

The Canadian and American governments are taking action to reduce

the loss of these whales by limiting ship speeds and restricting fishery activities in certain regions when the whales are present. Efforts to conserve and rebuild the population of North Atlantic right whales are supported by researchers who monitor these whales and volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to help free entangled whales, often at great personal risk.

The future of the North Atlantic right whale is far from certain, but what is clear is the direct link between their survival and the actions we choose to take. ■

JACQUELINE MILLER is a mammalogy technician at the ROM. OLIVER HADDRATH is a molecular technician at the ROM. Miller and Haddrath are part of the curatorial team on *Great Whales: Up Close and Personal*.

Artist Spotlight: Walter Sunahara

How do our stories shape our artistic expression? Walter Sunahara's visually striking paintings contemplate his childhood memories of internment in the remote interior of British Columbia during the Second World War

BY ROBERT B.J. MASON

Walter Sunahara (1935–2002) was a Japanese Canadian painter born in Vancouver, British Columbia. Considered a Nisei, a second-generation Japanese Canadian, he was part of a financially successful family—his parents owned fishing boats and a guest house and were prosperous members of the Vancouver community.

In 1942, under the guise of “national security,” the Canadian government imprisoned more than 22,000 Japanese Canadians. Citizens were detained in internment camps, and their businesses were seized and sold. Sunahara was seven years old when he was interned with his parents at Bay Farm, Slocan. In later years, he had a recurring nightmare where he was a small boy standing before a door that was about to be broken down.

The camp where Sunahara was imprisoned sat below a brooding conifer-covered mountain. Various aspects of his internment experience can be seen in the artist's work throughout his life, especially in his paintings.

Sunahara graduated from the Ontario College of Art and pursued graduate studies at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts (1960–63), specializing in Nihonga, a traditional expression of Japanese painting and printmaking. After trips to Southeast Asia and Europe, he came home to Canada to not only create art, but also share the means of creating art through education.

During his time at the Ontario Department of Education and the Ontario Arts Council, Sunahara was a key advocate and promoter of the

visual arts community. He worked most determinedly to create opportunities and provide broader public exposure for Canadian First Nations artists and craftspeople. His work with the communities led to him being honoured with an Eagle Feather by the Ontario First Nations Cultural Centres at M'Chigeeng First Nation.

In much of Sunahara's later work, his paintings have what appear to be ribbons running across the canvas. The curator of the *Founders* exhibition at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre Art Gallery in Toronto, Bryce Kanbara, wrote about the impact of Sunahara's childhood experience on his artwork: “The troubled memories of parting with loved ones, which had lain dormant since childhood, pierced [Sunahara's] artistic vision. As his wife, Yoshiko, explains, these paintings began as harmonious depictions of gardens or

the natural environment, but each time, his intent succumbed to invasions of incongruous streaks and bands across the surface.”

According to Kanbara, “the interjections were driven by Sunahara's tormented remembrance of Japanese crowds at the dockside—the departees on board and the well-wishers below attempting to maintain links with one another for as long as they could by grasping the ends of paper tape cascading from the ship. They are abstract paintings that sublimate themes of historic and personal separation, anxiety, and loss.” ■

ROBERT B.J. MASON is a database technician at the ROM. He is an archaeological scientist whose experience and research has included study of art, technology, trade, and industry from the beginnings of time to the Industrial Revolution around the world.



Sunahara in his Toronto studio seated in front of his painting *Maya Jungle*.



“

The troubled memories of parting with loved ones, which had lain dormant since childhood, pierced [Sunahara's] artistic vision.



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Above: *Spirit of the Conifer* (c. 1999) by Walter Sunahara. Acrylic painting on canvas, 91.5 × 117 cm

Left: *Generation of the Unrestrained* (c. 1998) by Walter Sunahara. Acrylic painting on canvas, 117 × 91.5 cm

Animal Crossing

The nomadic winter finches are irruptive migrants who plan their travels based on food supply

BY MARK PECK



Female and male red crossbill gathering sand and grit on roadside.

Bird migration is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the animal kingdom. Migration is found in most animal groups, with examples like monarchs, lobsters, eels, and blue whales, to name a handful, but no animal group does it better or more spectacularly than birds.

Migration is usually seasonal and almost always in response to the availability of food resources. Most of our songbird species arrive in Ontario in April and May to take advantage of the rich invertebrate life. They set up territories, build their nests, raise their

young, and then migrate back south by the end of September. Many of our water birds—loons, grebes, ducks, and swans—return to southern Ontario in autumn and leave again in early spring. This time, their passage is to northern breeding sites in the boreal forest and the Arctic as the land and waters thaw and their aquatic food resources once again become available.

And then, there are the winter finches. From a museum and taxonomic perspective, finches are passerines (songbirds) in the family *Fringillidae*. There are approximately 170 species

worldwide, with 10 breeding species in Ontario. Most are the same size, or slightly larger, than a sparrow, with red or yellow colouring. They have strong conical bills for eating seeds and during the summer are widely distributed across the boreal forest. They include a number of well-known species that end up at bird feeders and ornamental fruit trees, like the pine and evening grosbeaks. Many of the species are often seen along the edges of northern roads picking up grit to help them grind up their seeds.

Two of the most unique members of the finch group are the red crossbill and



Crossbills are known as irruptive migrants. Simply put, crossbills follow the food.

Female white-winged crossbill.



the white-winged crossbill. As their name implies, their bills cross at the tips. This crossed bill is very effective in helping the birds pry open various conifer cones and extract the seeds from within. Like all of our finches, they are also irregular in their winter wanderings. Crossbills are known as irruptive migrants. Simply put, crossbills follow the food.

Cone and seed production in most tree species is extremely variable. Depending on a number of climactic factors and previous cone production, spruce, pine, and tamarack may have an abundant cone crop in one area of the country one year followed by almost nothing the following year. When there is a good cone crop in the boreal forest, crossbills stay north. When it's a bad cone crop, crossbills move long distances, often in large flocks, to find better resources. Their movements are also unusual because they tend to move east and west more than north and south, making sure they stay in the geographic range of their favourite food trees.

These birds are very particular in their seed choices. In fact, ornithologists now recognize at least 10 distinct types of red crossbills in North America, based on their ecological associations, vocalizations, morphology, and genetics. The different types are known as "incipient species," a group that is about to become genetically isolated from the rest of the species due to an ecological or geographical barrier. In fact, in 2017, Type 9, a western species from Idaho, was elevated to a new species, the Cassia Crossbill, for the reasons just mentioned.

Three types of red crossbills are regularly reported in Ontario although Type 1, the Appalachian red crossbill, is the most common and has a preference for white pine. White-winged crossbills prefer white and black spruce. And unlike almost any other bird species in the province with the exception of the rock pigeon, crossbills can breed any time of year providing they have enough food to lay eggs and raise their young. In the case of the white-winged crossbill, there are generally three nesting periods aligned with the availability of seed production in different conifers: January and February if there is a good crop of white spruce, March to June with black spruce, and July to November as seeds mature on white spruce and tamarack. Nests are sturdy structures well hidden in a conifer. They are well insulated with lichens, plant fibres, moss, hair, and cocoons. They have to be. Winter temperatures in January and February, no matter where you are in Canada, are never to be taken lightly. The female builds the nest, incubates the eggs, and is responsible for brooding the young. The male defends the territory but will also come to the nest to feed the female or help with feeding of the young.

Life for the crossbills is a nomadic existence, with some unusual challenges that most bird species do not contend with. For birders, an irruption year of winter finches is always a welcome surprise. ▣

MARK PECK is Manager of the Schad Gallery of Biodiversity at the ROM.



Male white-winged crossbill.



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HOW TO
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ELIAS SIME: *TIGHTROPE*
April 3, 2021 to July 4, 2021
Roloff Beny Gallery
Level 4

ART, NATURE, AND THE HUMAN SOUL

Contemporary artist **Elias Sime** on staying human in an increasingly technological world

BY SILVIA FORNI

Elias Sime in front
of *Tightrope*:
Non-essential Speed.



IN DECEMBER 2020, as we were finalizing the design and interpretation of the exhibition *Elias Sime: Tightrope*, I had a virtual meeting with artist Elias Sime and his curator and long-time collaborator Meskerem Assegued. Elias and Meskerem were at the end of a busy workday focused on the multiple projects and activities at their ever-developing labour of love, the Zoma Museum. Zoma is a beautiful, multifunctional space and garden carved within the bustling urban mosaic of Addis Ababa. The museum opened to the public in 2019.

As with many things in 2020, our digitally mediated conversation felt a bit like a compromise: the best we could do for the time being, but still a welcome and exciting opportunity to connect and talk about Elias's art and vision.



Left: One of the recently completed buildings of the Zoma Museum. Addis Ababa. April 2019.



Above: Sime and an assistant working on the adobo wall of a new building.



Right: Mulberry pattern on the wall of the main Zoma Museum building

SILVIA FORNI: Elias, you were trained in a very traditional way in art school. What inspired you to work with materials that are very unique and somewhat unconventional?

ELIAS SIME: This is a hard question, and I sometimes wonder how to answer it. I don't think of academic learning as something that makes one an artist. Producing art makes you an artist. In my experience, art comes from a natural inclination. You have to be born an artist.

Education can teach you technique and mechanics. That in itself is a good thing, but education alone doesn't make you an artist. And you see this in other fields, not just art. I think whenever you follow your natural inclination, you can do something good.

FORNI: *Elias Sime: Tightrope* contains two bodies of work: your earlier pieces, in which you were using thread, buttons, and bottle caps, and the *Tightrope* series, in

which you introduce different types of materials and techniques. What do you look for when selecting the material for your art?

SIME: Whichever material I select, I think of it as something that has been touched by people. For instance, fabrics or threads have a kind of attachment to somebody. Bottle caps were made by machines, but there are people who used those machines.

I have very much that same kind of feeling with the *Tightrope* material. There's more connectivity even, because the electronic materials aren't touched by people in a tactile sense alone. They're attached to the personalities of the people using these devices, an extension of self even. They have transformed—from objects that have been touched to materials that have entered our souls, become part of who we are.

All the elements I use—whether it is bottle caps or buttons, early materials or what I use now—they all have stories. Each material is like a novel, and what moves me is the stories it tells.

“

EACH MATERIAL IS LIKE A NOVEL, AND WHAT MOVES ME IS THE STORIES IT TELLS.

”



Tightrope: Silent 2 (2019) by Elias Sime. Reclaimed electronic components on panel, 184.2 x 320 cm.



Tightrope 3 (2009–14) by Elias Sime. Reclaimed electronic components and fiberglass on panel, 207 x 495.3 cm.

FORNI: *Tightrope* is a title that you created for this series. What does “tightrope” mean for you?

SIME: The title was born out of many conversations with Meskerem. When I started creating this work, the two of us had several discussions about the stories we want to tell through this art. It was Meskerem who came up with the title.

There’s an Ethiopian story about a rope that snaps after it has been pulled too hard. Anything that’s tensed will break when more pressure is put on it. Then, there’s the uncertainty of walking on a tightrope, of always having to figure out how to keep one’s balance.

When we were discussing the title, we thought “tightrope” would be a good reflection of the contemporary context, which is what my work is about. I always talk to Meskerem when choosing a title and a lot of thought goes into it, because once the title is out, it’s out; there’s no way to take it back. It has to really be

something that reflects what the art is and, at the same time, needs to inspire. Titles cannot be rushed.

FORNI: What is this tension? Is the rope breaking or are we struggling?

SIME: It is both. The work that I’m doing presently is deeply connected to what I feel right now. I am using electrical wires. In our fast-developing technological world, the wires are our veins, our blood vessels. They are what connects us.

Sometimes, I feel like technology gives us knowledge while not giving knowledge at all. There are things that you purposely do using this technology, and then, there are times when you do something because you don’t know, when you’re not aware. On one hand, it’s dangerous, and on the other, it actually helps.

But what we’re missing in life, because of the intensity of the technology, is the

human soul. It’s part of the feelings we have when we see one another, eye to eye. Or the movement in our faces, our facial structure, our mouths, our noses, all our movements and the way we touch each other. All these things are missing when technology interferes. Technology takes away that human soul.

Right now, I’m looking at you and you’re looking at me, but we’re very far apart. I see your eyes through the screen, but having a real connection is not easy. But the actual feeling that you have, even if you’re angry, I don’t see it. I only see part of you. That’s what we miss when we’re not meeting in person. Yet, at the same time, I also understand the importance of technology.

I think about what happens in the future. I think about our passing away, once we’re no longer alive, into the very far future. And I wonder, what will happen to families, to love, to people being in touch? How will technology

affect our relationships long into the future? Maybe I'm being a little harsh, but I sometimes worry that we are becoming robots.

FORNI: Besides the element of human connections, your work also considers the human relationship with nature. What is the importance of nature in your work?

SIME: Nowadays, the computer motherboards that I am finding are mostly painted green, and finding different colours is not easy. Green is the most dominant colour now. I sometimes think about the people who create this machinery, the people who decide which colour they will use. I wonder if they pick the colour because they understand they're missing greenery. Because now, almost everything that I touch on the boards is green.

Another thing I think about is the origin of these materials. Where did they come from? What's the source of these materials? At the end of the day, they all come from the ground. All the metal pieces you see behind this machine, all the wires, the plastic wires, they're all dug out, they're part of that whole product. You need to dig through the earth to find these materials. In one way or another, all the computer components are a product of nature, even if they look disconnected from humanity.

The materials themselves are products of the earth and nature. In my work, they become colour.

I play with the colours. There's a deep green, light green, these various types of green that I put together to make a composition tell the story that I feel needs to be exposed through the work. There are times when I just can't find that one colour I'm looking for. Sometimes I'm looking for a certain kind of red, and it's not there, or another colour that is not there. So I wait for them. I wait as long as it takes to get those colours. It's the colours and the way I assemble them together

that makes the composition. It is how I tell the stories that I want to express.

FORNI: We live in a very different world now from when we met in person. The world has changed a lot. I was thinking, as I was working through this exhibition, how the pandemic has brought into focus the idea of connectivity, which is at the core of your work. Has your present work been influenced by what has happened in the last year?

SIME: Yes, the pandemic has actually brought the world together. It forced us to think about humanity. The virus doesn't select colour. It doesn't choose poor or rich. It doesn't care about ethnicity or anything. It just attacks you because you are human. And it has forced us to ask questions: What is love? What is humanity? All these questions that we had put aside are now on the table.

My recent work plays with the idea of the dome. I installed a piece in Amsterdam that is a dome cut in half once and then again. So there are four parts and then eight parts if you

keep cutting it. That work reflects the situation that you're talking about. It holds you because it's a dome-like structure—a concave. But it also talks about globalization as a whole piece cut into so many pieces.

The sculpture that I'm creating right now also deals with globalization because it actually talks about the need for unity, the need for us coming together despite our differences. When you split it up, those are our differences. But when you put it together, it creates a dome, the whole sphere. My work is directly related to what is happening today.

Actually, as you were asking me this question, what came in my mind was something Meskerem used to tell me: her wish about having an exhibition where the work is not identified by the name of the artist that made it.

What would happen if the work was exhibited with no information about the artist? How would it be if people were able to see art without filtering it through their idea of the person who made it? It makes me emotional because that's the world we want to be in. Where you are and who you are, not because of where you're born or where you come from. Because this is what COVID is doing. It's teaching us to be human. Even if it passes, it has left this lesson for us. Everything is human, no colours.



**WHAT WE'RE
MISSING IN LIFE,
BECAUSE OF THE
INTENSITY OF
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IS THE HUMAN
SOUL.**



FORNI: My next question is for both of you. What connection do you see between the artwork that Elias creates to be exhibited and what you are making together in Addis through Zoma? How do these two elements of your creativity connect?

SIME: When Zoma was created, it was a collaboration, and that was a must. Collaboration is very important, but it does not work by itself. Collaboration has to be harmonious; it can't be forced. It has to have an agreement from both sides. Zoma was our creation. It is a beginning of two people's ideas, but it's not the end of the idea. You have to think of it as something that's in a



Above: Assistants working in Elias Sime's studio. Addis Ababa. April 2019.

Below: Work in progress in Sime's studio at Zoma Museum. Addis Ababa. April 2019.

global context. So Zoma is no longer Meskerem's place, or Elias's place, or Elias and Meskerem's. Zoma has become Zoma while we've become the background.

What you need to think about when you think about collaboration is you can't clap with one hand to make noise, but when you use two hands to clap, you actually start making noise. The noise gets louder, and you get heard.

The symbolism of the two hands is also effective. When you think of two leaders meeting, they shake hands. All the rest of their bodies are still, but the two hands are shaking. That's unity.

So whenever we shake hands, there's a symbol of unity. The only difference is understanding the handshake that united us.

Zoma is a collaboration, and my art is also a product of collaboration. The research, where the material comes, all the people who collect for me or who assist me are collaborating with me. And that extends to the people who come to see the work and comment on it. Even what we're doing right now is a collaboration.



MESKEREM ASSEGUED:

I believe that we are products of our dreams. We are part of a remarkably diverse natural world. We exist because we share and collaborate with all the different elements of nature. Think about the amount of abuse the Earth has endured time and time again. Yet it continues to feed us because it too must exist. The oxygen we breathe in comes from plants, and the carbon dioxide we breathe out is food to the plants that we eat. This is a positive collaboration that our life depends on. When we are

negative, we are destructive to ourselves and to others. The destruction of the Amazon rainforest affects each one of us regardless of differences. If we dream about a fair, loving, and prosperous future, we will achieve it because everything we do will focus on it. Elias and I have been working together for many years. We collaborate on almost everything. At the same time, we also respect our differences. We both believe that great outcomes are products of collaboration and positive outlook.



Tightrope: Surface and Shadow 2, (2016) by Elias Sime. Reclaimed electronic components and buttons on panel, 275.9 x 519.8 cm.

FORNI: Elias, you have a deep sense of optimism. How do you maintain this in face of the tensions of the present moment?

SIME: Being pessimistic, thinking negatively, finding something to oppose is easy. Even if I want to skip talking about the situation in Ethiopia now, I still want to talk about humanity in general. Negativity creates more negativity.

I believe that, for the sake of humanity, we should build life from what is positive. What are the positive things that come out of even the hardest situation? What are the good parts of a story?

Think about this. When you wake up feeling like it's going to be a good day,

you've decided that promising things are going to happen. So you start being curious. Great things are possible because that's what you've told your mind, and that's what it accepts.

But when you wake up feeling sad, that emotion will follow you. So compare the two feelings and make a choice. How do you want to lead your life? Even when you get sick, when you're in the worst situation, if you can force yourself to think of the situation's positive aspects, you can start trying to find them. Then, things start changing for the better. That's how I want to think.

Thinking this way isn't easy, because that's not what we're used to. But I also believe that we're born positive. ■

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**I BELIEVE THAT,
FOR THE SAKE OF
HUMANITY, WE
SHOULD BUILD
LIFE FROM WHAT
IS POSITIVE.**

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We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Elias Sime: Tightrope is organized by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.

HOW TO
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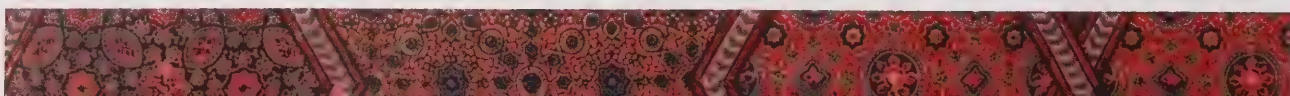
THE CLOTH THAT CHANGED
THE WORLD: INDIA'S PAINTED
AND PRINTED COTTONS

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The
contemporary
search for
sustainable
cotton, colour,
and design

INDIAN

Our current exhibition *The Cloth That Changed the World: India's Painted and Printed Cottons* explores and celebrates handcrafted textiles

made of cotton and natural dyes, known as "chintz." Any thoughts of environmental damage or climate change may, at first blush, seem far away. In reality, small-scale farmers and craftspeople in India today face the same escalating challenges in making colourful cotton cloth as do industrial mills and manufacturers, precipitated by changing environmental conditions and an increased global demand for their goods. As a result, artisans and designers are compelled to be creative and develop innovative methods that promote sustainable cotton, colour, and design.

The Cloth That Changed the World introduces visitors to pressing issues facing the textile industry and the world at large, and invites us all to reflect on our power as consumers. As it has in the past, the worldwide desire for coloured cotton cloth and garments is shaping our human relationships—and human–environment relationships—in multiple and complex ways. It is becoming impossible to ignore the fact that our consumption of clothing, often dictated by waxing and waning seasonal trends, has a major impact on our interconnected planet, forcing us to think carefully about our lifestyle choices.

BY SARAH FEE

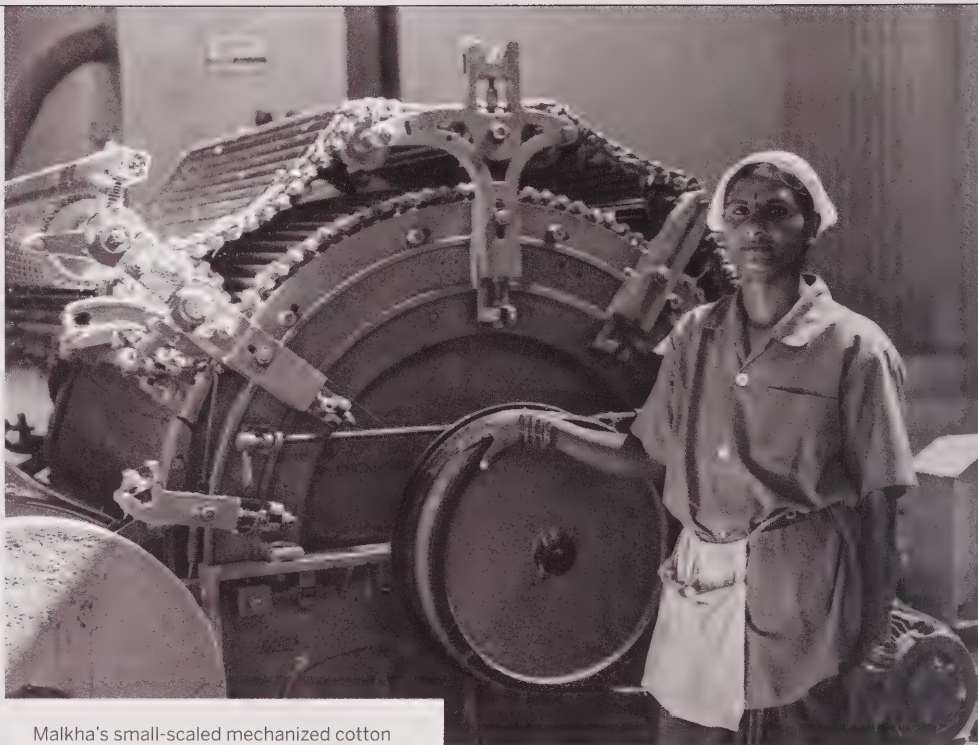
CHINTZ

The consequences of contemporary consumer desire

Over the past 20 years, the world has fallen in love with “fast fashion:” apparel produced rapidly to keep pace with ever-changing fashion trends and sell at low prices. Made of thin fabrics quickly sewn for low wages, these garments are usually worn only once or twice before being thrown away. North Americans today buy twice as many garments as they did 15 years ago and keep them half as long. Roughly 100 billion new garments are now produced every year; 87 percent of garments are ultimately incinerated or end up in landfill.

In recent years, newsfeeds and social media have widely shared scientific studies that lay bare the environmental damage caused by this overproduction and overconsumption—namely, toxicity and waste. Modern textile and garment making ranks among the world’s most polluting and water-consuming industries. It famously requires 2,700 litres of water to grow the cotton for a single T-shirt. Contributing to the pollution stream is the modern washing machine, which releases enormous loads of harmful particles. Microfibres from synthetic polyester garments have recently been found in alarming quantities deep in Arctic waters and ocean sediments, disrupting the food web. As a natural fibre, cotton may seem to be a benign alternative, but today’s industrial mills treat and dye it with harmful chemicals. The production of blue jeans in particular—over five billion annually—and their subsequent washing release toxic synthetic dyes and cotton microfibres into world waters, at both their source of manufacture in Asia and their consumer destinations in North America, from the temperate to Arctic regions, according to a study published in 2020 by Samantha N. Athey et al. at the University of Toronto.

One type of “slow fashion,” in the form of handcrafted textiles



Malkha's small-scaled mechanized cotton spinning offers a living wage.

and garments, is less harmful but not benign. Even the small-scale production of coloured cottons can consume much water and damage ecosystems. Which raises the question: how are farmers and craftspeople, who for millennia have produced India’s unique printed cottons, confronting these problems, especially as global demand for their goods rises and water supplies in India change and shrink?

Sustainable cotton

For thousands of years, consumers the globe over have loved the feel and washability of cotton. Yet growing cotton today relies heavily on irrigation and pesticides.

In 2017, after a 200-year hiatus, India regained its position as the world’s largest grower of cotton, and is now home to nearly 10 million cotton farmers. But rather than India’s own cotton species (*Gossypium arboreum*), domesticated 5,000 years ago, the

majority of India’s cotton crop today is an introduced American species (*Gossypium hirsutum*) that has been genetically modified to resist pests. Its major advantage is its long fibres, best suited to industrial machinery. But its seeds are expensive, and it requires harmful fertilizers and pesticides, which some studies link to the impoverishment of small-scale farmers. Once the ripe cotton is picked, it is compressed for shipping to distant factories where it is chemically treated and machine spun in enormous mills.

For 20 years, Indian scientists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have worked to re-introduce native Indian cotton species and varieties, which are adapted to local environments and largely rain fed. These native species facilitate organic cotton growing methods that use fewer pesticides and fertilizers. The NGO Khamir in the state of Gujarat has re-introduced the local cotton variety *kala*, well adapted to the Kutch region’s arid conditions. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the non-profit group Malkha is likewise working

to re-introduce local cotton varieties. Above all, Malkha seeks to once again make cotton yarn spinning a sustainable rural activity that provides a living wage. Directly connecting cotton farmers to local, semi-mechanized spinners also contributes to a better cloth: cotton that is neither compressed nor chemically treated makes superior yarn and fabrics that better absorb natural dyes, according to Malkha's experience.

Sustainable colour

Cotton's ability to take bright colour accounts for much of its appeal. The invention of synthetic dyes, beginning in the 1850s, reduced the time and cost of creating colour and greatly expanded the available palette. But used on an industrial scale in increasing quantities, synthetic dyes and additives consume enormous quantities of water, and the wastewater released is a literal river of toxic chemicals, impacting aquatic life and drinking water. An estimated 20 percent of industrial water pollution comes from fabric dyeing and treatment. Some classes of synthetic dyes contain known carcinogens. For example, the preparation and use of synthetic indigo blue dyes—our denim jeans again!—require large amounts of formaldehyde, which is released back into the environment during repeated rinsing and run off.

Yet dyeing with natural plant dyes, including India's own native indigo plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*), also requires large amounts of water. Bleaching cloth to produce brilliant whites—a hallmark of some Indian chintz traditions, and the ground colour preferred in the West—can take over 100 washings. This is why India's cotton printing workshops have always been located near rivers and ponds. Indeed, the special qualities of India's waters contributed greatly to its unparalleled, vibrant fabric colours. But the metallic salts (mordants) used with dye plants to make vibrant reds and blacks can be harmful in large quantities. Furthermore, water supplies are running

notoriously low in India, linked in part to increased use of groundwater by growing cities, industry, and agriculture, and in part to weakening monsoon rains associated with climate change. In many parts of our planet, such water shortages loom as a major humanitarian crisis.

In response to changing water supplies, India's small-scale cotton printing workshops are innovating. Here are two examples that Eiluned Edwards, professor of Global Cultures of Textiles and Dress at Nottingham Trent University, chronicles in *Imprints of Culture*.

For centuries, the Khatri cotton-printing families of the arid Kutch region relied on the Saran River to wash their cloth. But in the 1980s, the river dried up. The printers turned to well water and washing tanks, and developed a filtration system using sand and gravel to remediate the heavy iron content of the well water. But with lowering groundwater, today's wells reach depths of over 400 feet, and the water is salty.

Cotton printers and dyers in Kutch, Gujarat, now look to rainwater and communal washing tanks to conserve shrinking groundwater supplies. Workshop of Abduljabbar Khatri, Dhamadka.



The Khatriis now collect rainwater, are innovating water-efficient printing techniques, and are working with state agencies on a common effluent treatment plant in an effort to remove excess iron and recycle water.

“

In response to changing water supplies, India's small-scale cotton printing workshops are innovating.



The four steps in Bodhi's bioremedial water recapture:

1. Wastewater pH levels are neutralized by adding alum or lime.
2. Overnight, the dye sludge will settle to the bottom.
3. Wastewater passes three times through a stepped filter of sand and gravel.
4. The root systems of canna lilies further bioremediate the wastewater. Treated water can be re-used for textile printing, or in the garden.



In the Gujarati city of Vadodara, the textile printing studio Bodhi uses eco-friendly chemical dyes that require less water. Bodhi's founders, Mala and Pradeep Sinha, have worked since 2000 to develop efficient washing methods and a water recapture system. Their studio uses only rainwater. The cloth is efficiently washed using a series of conjoined barrels. Wastewater is cleaned by a bioremedial system developed in partnership with Dr. Sandeep Joshi (Shrishti Eco-Research Institute, Pune, Maharashtra), which uses canna plants and sand filters; the plant roots remove the heavy metals, allowing the purified water to be safely re-used. Other small printing studios, such as Brigitte Singh in neighbouring Rajasthan, are adopting this system.

Sustainable design

In India, as around the world, growing numbers of fashion designers and labels are embracing slow fashion and promoting more environmentally friendly textile and garment making. Mumbai's Lakmé Fashion Week has devoted two days to the promotion of sustainable fashion since 2015 and established the Circular Design Challenge in 2019 in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme.

One element of sustainable design is minimizing cutting and scraps. Some fashion designers thus continue to promote the sari, the quintessential waste-free garment. Others, such as Aneeth Arora of Péro, recycle scraps

into accessories. Another dimension of sustainable design, according to Charlotte Kwon, founder of the Vancouver-based Maiwa Handprints, is working responsibly with cotton printing families over the long term. Too often, external designers commission new patterns and colours for a single season, causing printers to master new techniques and carve new printing blocks that are soon discarded.

The ROM exhibition features two Indian fashion lines committed to sustainable chintz made with natural dyes. From the Spring 2019 "Sindhu" collection of the luxury lifestyle company Good Earth comes a menswear ensemble—a tailored suit jacket accessorized with numerous uncut wrappers of full textile lengths—that is

block printed in natural dyes by Junaid Ismail Khatri. The fashion label 11.11/eleven eleven is committed to using handwoven cloth (khadi), natural dyes, local hand skills, and the recycling of all scraps—even loose threads. Its Seed to Stitch line allows consumers to trace the full supply chain and encodes the names of each individual artisan involved in a garment's creation: spinner, dyer, embroiderer, stitcher.

“

The ROM exhibition features two Indian fashion lines committed to sustainable chintz made with natural dyes.



Left: Woman's tunic (Ikeidn) and shoes (badouche), Kalamkari line (2019). 11.11/eleven eleven, New Delhi. Right: Menswear Sindhu line (2019). Garment design by Good Earth, New Delhi. Natural dye printing by the workshop of Junaid Ismail Khatri, Kutch, Gujarat.

What you can do

The environmental and human costs of fast fashion made the headlines again when production in Asia ground to a halt in spring 2020 as a result of COVID-19. The pause revealed the plight of poorly paid textile workers, and how air and water quality vastly improved with factory closures. For the post-COVID era, numerous individuals, groups, companies, and governments are now planning for a “green recovery.”

As consumers, there are ways we can contribute to this effort. We can focus on altering our purchasing habits so that we buy less, “buy once, buy well,” which would mean investing in quality

pieces that will last over time. We can buy used or repurposed clothing made of discarded fabrics and consult the social and environmental sustainability ratings for clothing labels (Goodonyou.eco, sustainablefashiontoolkit.com); some guarantee their supply chains (e.g., they can tell where and how the cotton was grown, processed, and dyed and the garments were sewn). Finally, another small step that we can take is to wash clothing less often, in cooler water, and line dry whenever possible. (Jeans manufacturers recommend washing once a month.) Cotton, colour, and design can be enjoyed sustainably. ■

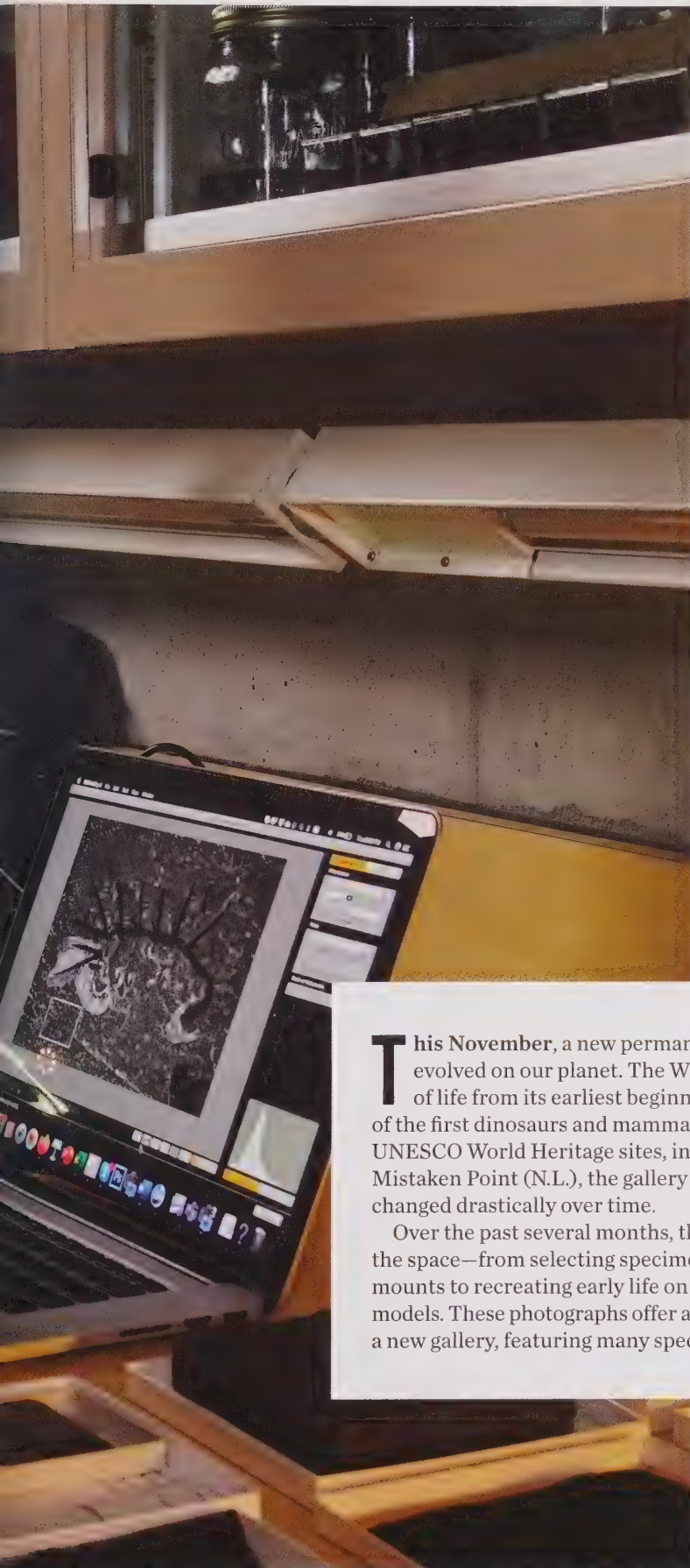
LEARN MORE

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DAWN OF LIFE

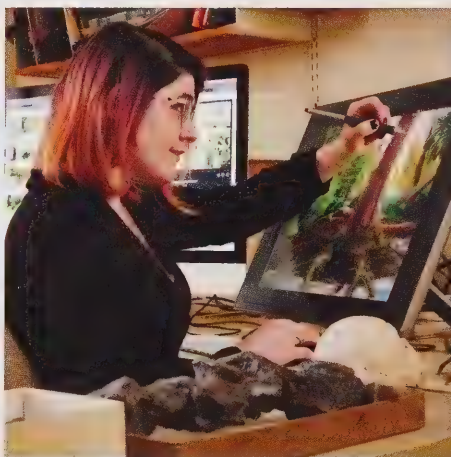
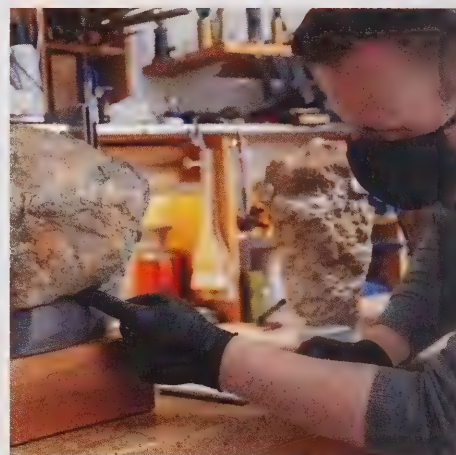
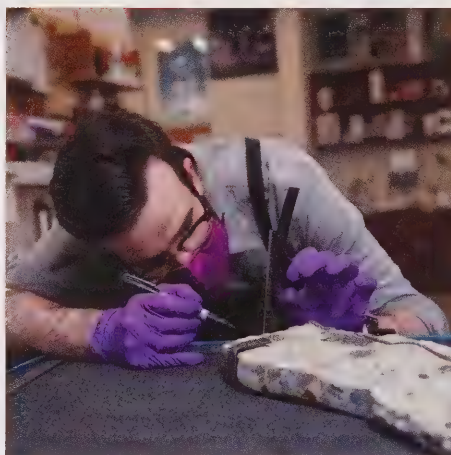
A SNEAK PEEK
AT PREPARATIONS FOR A
MAJOR NEW PERMANENT GALLERY
SET TO OPEN AT THE ROM
LATER THIS YEAR

This November, a new permanent gallery will invite visitors to explore how life evolved on our planet. The Willner Madge Gallery, Dawn of Life will trace the story of life from its earliest beginnings, about four billion years ago, to the emergence of the first dinosaurs and mammals. Featuring remarkable specimens from Canadian UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the renowned Burgess Shale (B.C.) and Mistaken Point (N.L.), the gallery will look at how life evolved and diversified as Earth changed drastically over time.

Over the past several months, the gallery team has been hard at work developing the space—from selecting specimens in our collections, cleaning them up, and making mounts to recreating early life on Earth through large-scale murals, illustrations, and models. These photographs offer a glimpse into some of the work involved in preparing a new gallery, featuring many specimens that have never been on display before. ■

Jean-Bernard Caron,
the Richard M. Ivey Curator
of Invertebrate Palaeontology,
examines a specimen for display.

SNAPSHOT



From top, left to right: Technicians Maryam Akrami and Ian Morrison clean specimens, while preparators Nick Clemens and Stephen Fisher analyze objects for building mounts. Curator Jean-Bernard Caron examines a spiny trilobite, palaeo artist Danielle Dufault works on one of the graphics for the gallery, and artist Georgia Guenther sculpts some of the model plant life for display.

Photos by Paul Eekhoff: top row: left and right; middle row: left; bottom row: left; middle row: left; middle row: middle and right.

YOU DID IT!

Our heartfelt appreciation to the generous supporters who donated to our annual year-end appeal, raising over \$150,000 for the ROM. In these uncertain times, museums have the power to unite and inspire communities. We are so grateful for your commitment, which ensures that millions of visitors will continue to find hope and comfort in exciting collections, exhibitions and lifelong learning at the ROM.

Thank you for investing in YOUR museum—and in our collective future.

If you missed our appeal, but would still like to give, please visit rom.on.ca/give.



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The ROM is proud to celebrate the exceptional community of supporters whose contributions have enabled us to continue to inspire and connect audiences during these uncertain times. We are tremendously grateful for the vision, dedication and generosity of our award recipients and to all supporters for your loyalty!



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GENEROUS SUPPORT THROUGH A CHALLENGING TIME



It's now been a full year since COVID-19 invaded and pervaded our world. The pandemic has dominated our thinking, heightened our anxieties, and altered our lifestyles. At the same time, it has taught us so much about what really matters—who we are as individuals and more importantly, who we are as a community.

We have a remarkable community that believes in the ROM and supports our mission to serve and inspire people to learn from the past, understand the present, and build a brighter future. In times of crisis, people rely on trusted institutions that provide context, solace, and inspiration. And during this challenging year, we have repeatedly seen your commitment to the Museum reflected in generous support of all kinds, at all levels.

Generous support. It's visible in your continuing engagement through online programs, membership, and extensive volunteering. It's visible in the individuals who unstintingly give their energy, time, and support to the ROM—

from Board and committee members to our enthusiastic fundraising volunteers. It's evident in our Donor Circle supporters who have continued to give so generously to the ROM throughout this challenging time.

That generosity is also the hallmark of transformational gifts that created endowed curatorships in 2020: the Allan and Helaine Shiff Curatorship of Climate Change and the Isabel and Gino Vettoretto Curatorship of North American Archaeology.

All these curatorial endowments were matched by the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust, established by one of our most visionary donors. Secure, ongoing, endowed funding is especially critical in times like these to ensure that the ROM continues to thrive. These new endowments are truly an investment that maximizes future programs, research, growth, and impact that will make the ROM even more vibrant and relevant.

Donors truly do make the difference. Consider our Willner Madge Gallery,

Dawn of Life, set to open later this year, which is entirely funded by donors. We are deeply grateful to all the donors who are helping us create this exciting, expansive new gallery that we look forward to celebrating together.

Behind every great museum—and your Museum—are passionate advocates, tireless volunteers, great curators, and generous donors whose contributions enrich lives, now and in the future. Thank you for directly impacting the ROM's ongoing work to provide a better understanding and connection to our world. (And now that spring is here, we know our world will surely settle into a new, exciting version of “normal” soon!)

Sincerely,

Susan Horvath,
ROM Governors President & CEO

LIVES AND LEGACIES

Invest in the ROM's future today



As a retired graphic designer, Neil Cochrane has a deep appreciation for good design. In fact, you could even say it's in his blood. His family has been involved in design in one form or another—as gardeners, house decorators, and wallpaper printers—since the late 18th century.

After his move to Toronto in 1970, his passion led him to the Royal Ontario Museum. He especially loves the Museum's European collections and is happy to wander through the galleries among objects that have become much like old friends. "When we personally connect with a piece, it's like we are speaking directly to the individuals who created them hundreds or thousands of years ago," he says.

Over the years, Neil has deepened his connection to the ROM through the Currelly Legacy Society (CLS), a group of thoughtful donors who have made a future commitment to the Museum. With his gift, Neil honours the memory of his late partner Ambrose Wah Hing Lo by creating a generous endowment in his name.



Endowment Fund Gifts

By establishing a named endowment—either today or in your estate plans—you can honour a loved one or keep your own legacy alive at the ROM by supporting its future.

Neil and Ambrose met in 1981 and enjoyed 18 years together before the latter passed away. The endowment fund allows the ROM to acquire new and significant examples of Chinese art—an area that was very close to Ambrose's heart.

Out of all the charities and causes he could have supported, Neil chose to give to the ROM because in his words, "while research gives us better and longer lives, art gives us a reason to live."

When he first established his endowment in 2005, Neil planned to finance it through a bequest in his will. But late last year, he decided to activate the fund immediately with an outright gift.

"I realized that I wanted to be able to see the impact of my donation in my lifetime," says Neil. He also hopes others who knew Ambrose or share his passion for supporting the ROM's Chinese collections will consider making a small yet meaningful contribution to help grow the fund. "To be able to create a permanent memorial to Ambrose while ensuring that future generations will enjoy the Chinese collection as he once did is just wonderful."

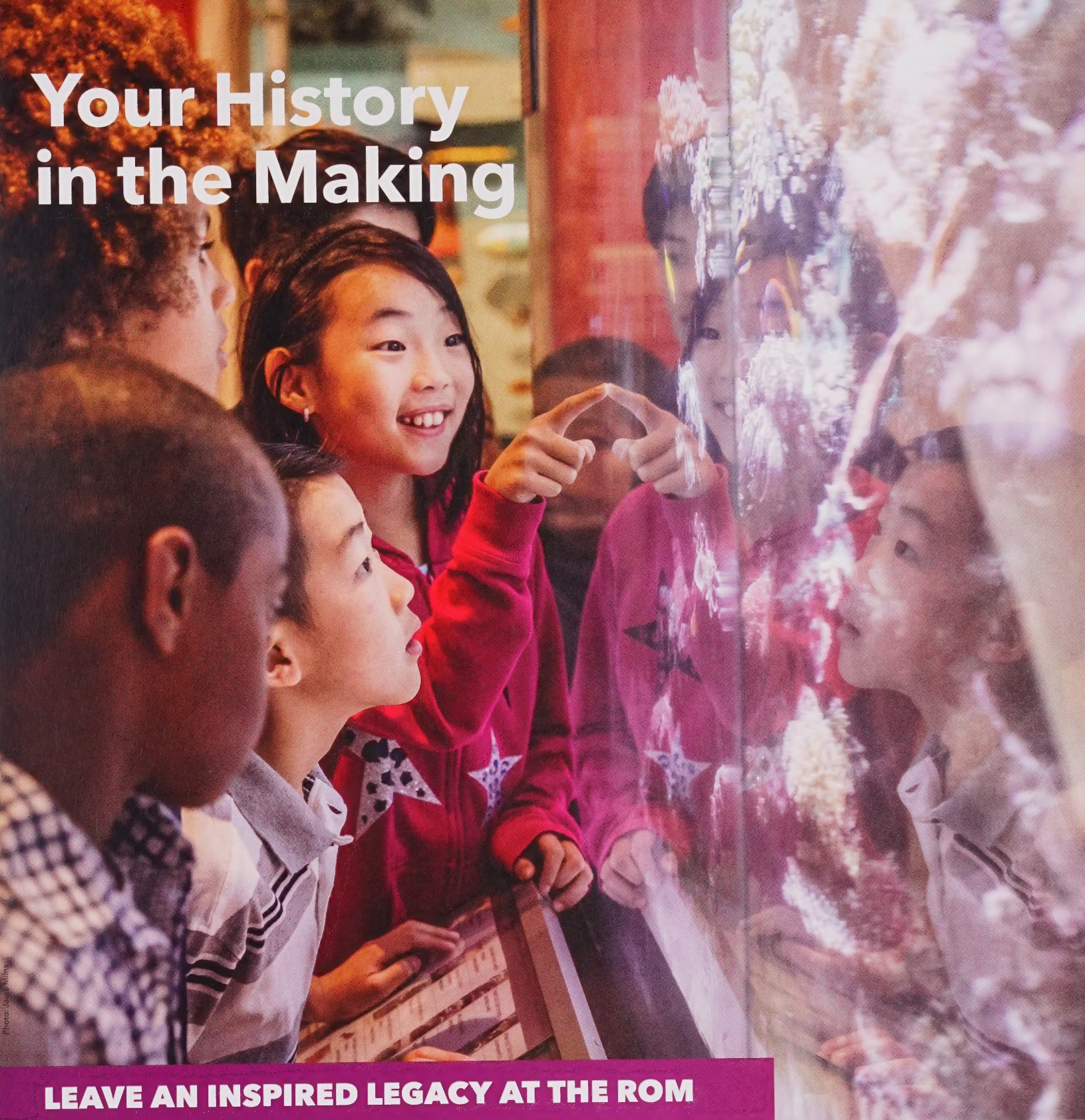
As a member of the Currelly Executive Committee, Neil is also a dedicated ambassador for the Museum. He has played a leadership role in thanking fellow members for their gift commitments as well as advancing CLS outreach to the LGBTQ community.

Art has always played a central role in Neil's life. Thanks to his generosity, the arts will continue to enrich the lives of the people of Ontario and beyond for years to come.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about leaving a legacy at the ROM, contact Janice Correa at janicec@rom.on.ca or 416.586.5578.

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A 19th-Century Whalebone Corset

A closer look at an object from a time when fashion fuelled the whaling industry

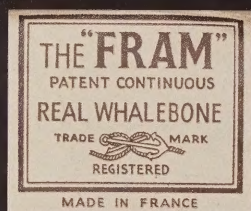
BY ALEXANDRA PALMER

For centuries, whalebone was used for shaping Western fashion. Whalebone, the keratin ribs in the upper jaws of the whale, was prepared by boiling for 12 hours until it was soft enough to cut into various lengths and dimensions. Each baleen rib was examined by the workman and sorted according to length and quality as he worked. It hardened when cooled.

Baleen had a variety of commercial uses: it was made into stay bones for corsets approximately 12–16 inches long; sets of eight ribs or stretchers 20–40 inches long were used for umbrellas and parasols; it was cut into various sizes and thicknesses for bristle bone used in brushes including for chimney and street cleaning, as well as used for covering whip handles, walking sticks, and telescopes. Leftover shavings were used by upholsterers for stuffing or sent to farmers for fertilizer.

This cotton corset (1883–85) is machine embroidered at the bust with a feminine, floral design. Baleen bones are inserted into channels all around the torso. The front placket is shaped in an S for the desired silhouette. A metal hook-and-eye system enables the wearer to dress more easily before she is laced firmly at the back.

The baleen roll was commercially produced by slicing, splicing, gluing, and encasing the re-formed baleen into one continuous length that could be cut as needed for corsetry and millinery. FRAM (meaning forward), refers to the schooner built for Nansen and Amundsen's 1893 Arctic expedition,



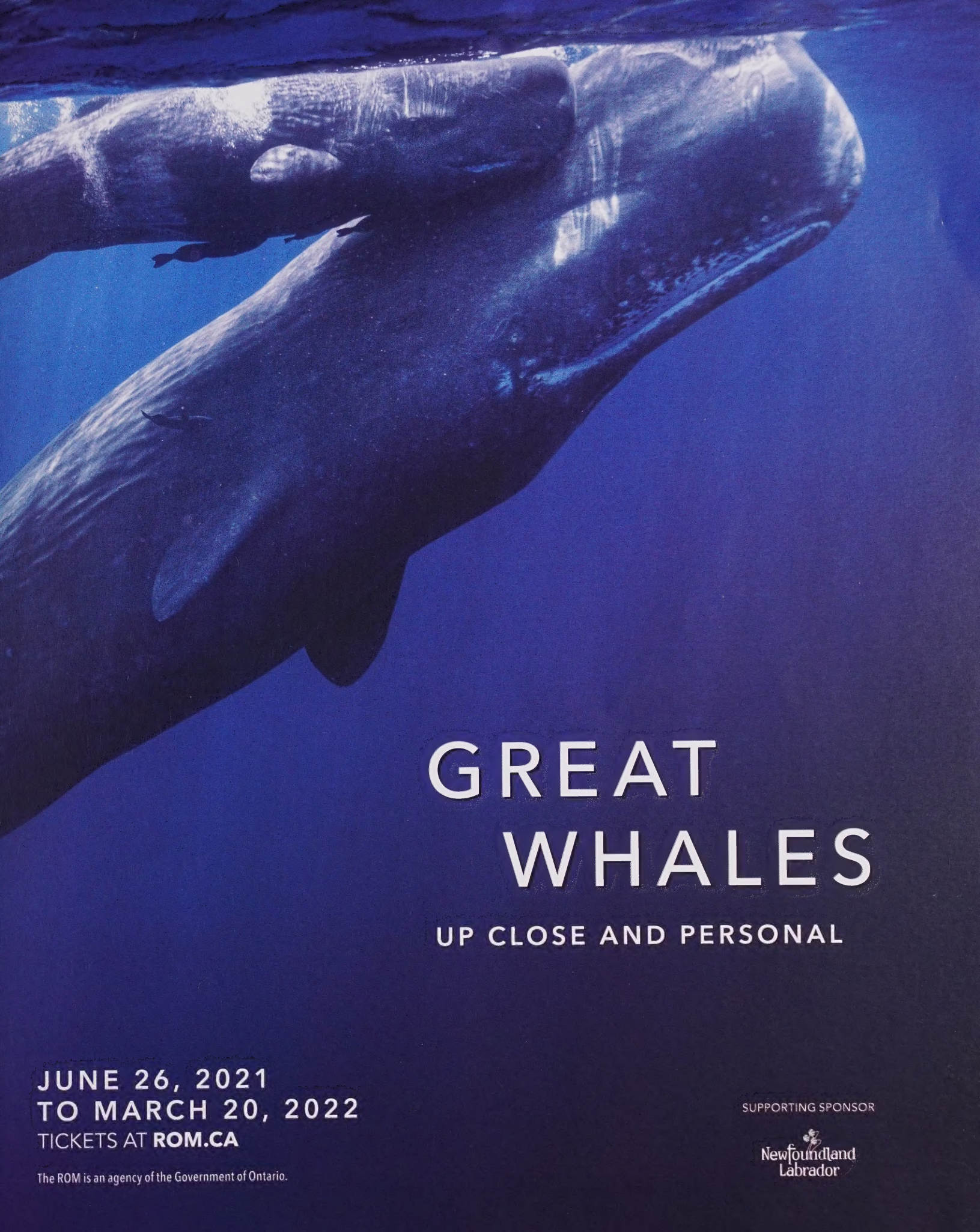
which was designed to withstand the pressure of being frozen in the ice. The FRAM label implies that this baleen roll, like the ship, is strong and can hold its shape under stress. It also assists in dating it to the turn of the 19th century, a time when whalebone for corsets was largely replaced with sprung steel. When worn, real whalebone becomes soft and pliable from body heat, and the corset comfortably moulds to the

torso, making real whalebone corsets an expensive luxury.

In 1955, the International Whaling Commission banned the hunting of blue whales in the North Atlantic. The ban was extended to the rest of the world 11 years later. ■

ALEXANDRA PALMER is the Nora E. Vaughan Senior Curator of Global Fashion & Textiles at the ROM.





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